# BODY KNOTS

### HOWARD SCHATZ

FOREWORD BY OWEN EDWARDS

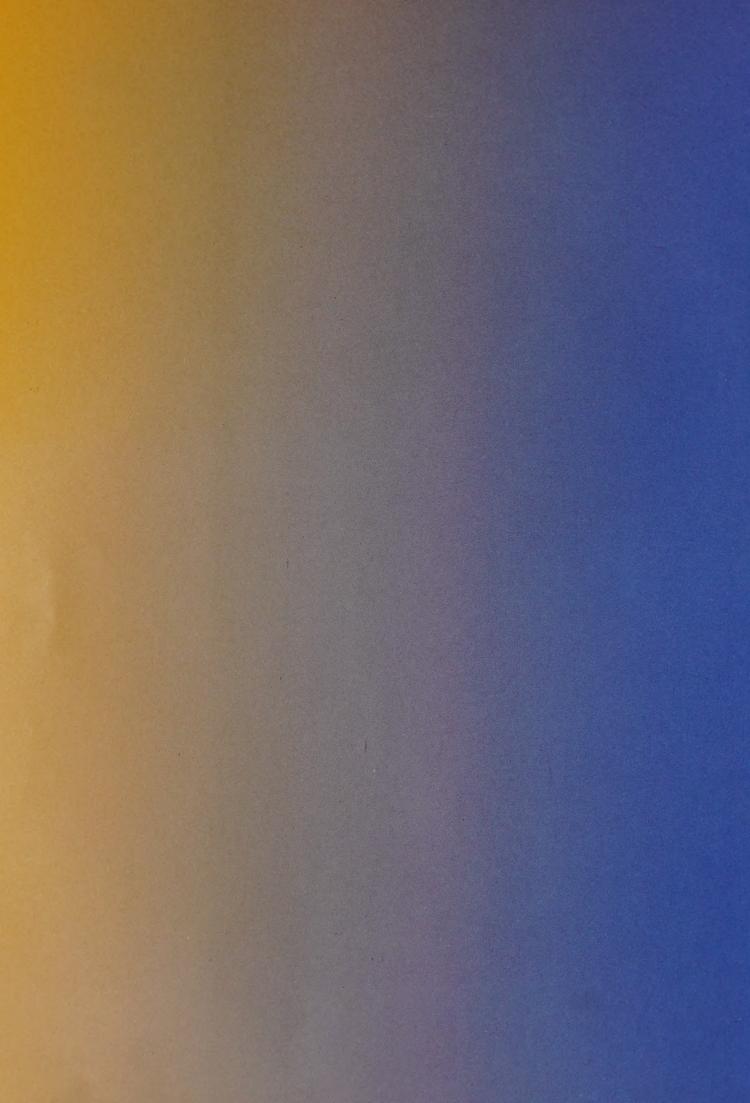
n his tenth volume of work, BODY KNOTS, acclaimed photographer Howard Schatz presents the human form as we have never seen it before.

This dynamic, sumptuous, and captivating volume is a celebration of the human body, its weight, its frailty, its strangeness, and its beauty. Fine art destined to capture the popular imagination, BODY KNOTS is a collection of visually compelling photographs of bodies.

Page after provocative page, Schatz transforms his nudes— all beautifully colorized in vibrant saturated tones as well as metallic ink—into a wild variety of forms, from the headless to the humorous, from the footless to the fantastic, from the sensual to the sardonic. Twisted, turned, and seen from different perspectives, these bodies take on shapes and contortions one would not dream possible.

Created by a master photographer, BODY KNOTS is an extraordinary volume displaying the human body at its most malleable yet articulate, rendering it as familiar as arrestingly new.





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#### WARNING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME



he majority of the people who "tied" themselves into knots for this project are dancers, trained to follow exacting instructions and psychologically prepared for a very difficult physical challenge. Here's what it was like:

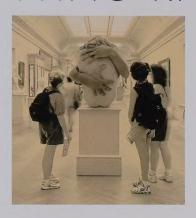
"Bryan, you sit down here and tuck your legs in...good. Lenna, hide your feet here, under the left side of his tush and his thigh—good—now bend yourself over him, over his head, and get the top of your head all the way down and into his lap. Bryan, pull your head way down, try to touch your chin to your chest and your nose to your belly button. OK, now, take your left arm and wrap it around her, from the back of her thighs, over her tush, and onto her back—I want your arm to cover the line of her tush and to support her so she won't fall over when you two squeeze the knot.

"Now, Lenna, take your right hand—place it backwards and put it up his back—higher, higher—get your fingertips to reach up toward his neck. With your left arm grab his right arm and Bryan, you grab her left arm, and pull the knot tight. Keep your heads tucked way in, hidden. Great. Now, I'm coming in with my camera to look for the image, to find the knot. When I count to three, squeeze really tight and hold it until I take the picture."

Holding the camera, I walk around them, visualizing an image. It's biological sculpture that I'm after, without identification (no head, except rarely, for effect). I bend down, lay on the ground to shoot up, or get on a ladder to shoot down. I look, I look. Often I'll ask for an adjustment, to bring a hand or shoulder closer to the camera, or to hide a foot. And I look.... When I see it, I come in close—and then "one, two, three, SQUEEZE!!!!!!"

Snap (pop), the picture is taken and they loosen their grip—often with "aaaaaagh." I look some more, find another perspective, or make another adjustment, then count again, "squeeze!", make a picture. This goes on for five or six shots and then we "untie" and start all over again.

#### TYING KNOTS



The great magazine art director Alexey Brodovitch used to tell his photographers that if they looked through the lens and saw something they'd seen before, they shouldn't press the shutter. For any artist, this injunction against repetition or derivation would be daunting.

The demand for novelty can lead to despair, desperate acts, and all sorts of nonsense slouching along under the banner of art. For a photographer, the search for something entirely new can be especially maddening, since there has never been a more voracious collector and creator of images than the camera. Just try imagining something that hasn't been tracked down on the planet or tricked up in a studio. The medium has already had its share of Mozarts and Beethovens (not to mention legions of Vivaldis and Ravels), so much of what is done today refers to a brief but glorious past. Every now and then a photographer who is very good or very lucky (or both) happens upon something original, but before you know it that startling vision has been converted into a trademark style.

Howard Schatz is very good and perhaps very lucky. In the space of a relatively short career in photography, he has created a collection of pictures that is rarely less than exceptional and remarkably often entirely new. Novelty, of course, is not by itself a virtue. What's best about Schatz's work is that he shows us things in a new way not to shock and infuriate but to delight and refresh. He opens our eyes wide, and makes us glad he did.

For the past ten years, Schatz has worked with dancers. His artistic collaboration with the members of troupes in New York and San Francisco, both classical and modern, began almost accidentally when he was exploring ways to photograph various sorts of people underwater in a swimming pool (including my son and me, fully

dressed). In his typically methodical, indefatigable way, Schatz had tried many approaches without settling on an approach that worked. Then he discovered that one of his subjects, Katita Waldo, a ballerina with the San Francisco Ballet, could express physical energy in the zero gravity of immersion. With a discipline learned through years of training, Waldo was able to ignore the novel conditions of her environment and create intensity where others had given in to a kind of weightless lassitude. The ballerina became a kind of muse, launching Schatz on a long and continuing photographic partnership with all kinds of dancers. This involvement has resulted in three underwater books, a rapt study of dancers' bodies in the studio, and numerous covers and portraits for Dance magazine. It's never safe to predict an artist's trajectory, especially when that artist is as protean, determined, and inclined to obsession as Schatz. But for the moment, at least, with BODY KNOTS, his work with dancers seems to have reached a remarkable crescendo that will be difficult to surpass.

Though dancers are the subjects of BODY KNOTS, it's not insignificant that this work is a digression. Schatz, it so happens, became a full-time photographer only after rising to prominence in an entirely different field. It may be, then, that he's less worried than a younger artist about whether everything he does makes good linear sense—whether a given project adheres closely to the main stem of his previous successes. Rather, Schatz is willing to be lured down an unfamiliar path by any idea that intrigues him, and he'll test that idea exhaustively, like a mathematician with a promising theorem, until it proves out or not. If the promise becomes a project, all that matters to him is that by working and reworking an idea he can capture images that were worth the pursuit.

The idea that produced BODY KNOTS was uncomplicated: the photographer wanted to make "biologic sculpture" using two or more bodies intertwined, reducing anatomy to primal simplicity, braiding limbs and torsos into a kind of living netsuke. Like such predecessors as Bill Brandt, Andre Kertesz, and Irving Penn, Schatz wanted

to re-see the body, but he wanted to go further: to make separate bodies into a single, mysterious structure. In one aspect of his earlier underwater work, Schatz produced an intriguing alphabet book in which each letter and number was formed by the carefully choreographed combination of a male and female dancer. These intricately worked out poses, though strictly programmatic (each had to produce a readable letter), must have suggested other, more abstract possibilities. The process of achieving these forms, arduous for dancers and photographer alike, gave Schatz the ability to coax unseen shapes out of the profoundly familiar material of the body, and the language to ask his dancers for what he needed.

The idea to make abstract human sculpture may have been simple, but the work was not. In his introduction to this book, the photographer describes how he proceeded and what the dancers went through (though looking at these pictures, it's not hard to imagine the grunts and groans). But it seems safe to say that not even the demands of underwater work were as rigorous as these sometimes perverse, pretzeled poses. Schatz talks about "getting past the thought that these knots were bodies," but his models weren't so lucky. Though he wasn't able to succeed at tying every knot he imagined-"My ideas were always modified by what human bodies could do"-Schatz was able to direct them into contortions almost impossible for a viewer to deconstruct. He used a computer to manipulate colors and shadow and sometimes overlay patterns, but with only one exception—which the reader must ferret out on his or her own—the positions were as they appear. How fortunate for Schatz that dancers are so accustomed to suffering!

The best ideas are self-generating and self-evolving, and so are the best artists. As Schatz went from one knot to the next, the variations on a theme mutated. The simplest forms grew more complex: bodies metamorphosed into beetles; hands and feet swooped into the foreground and took on lives of their own (with mute eloquence expressing surprise, delight, shock); and the most basic pose of a single human being became more grotesque than the most tormented gargoyle agonizing above Paris. Given the new and

increasingly potent artistic ordnance of the computer, Schatz was able to take already fantastical pictures and, sitting late into the night in front of a glowing screen, add layer after layer of imagination and variations. In the process, he accomplished one of the hardest things in photography: he makes us smile, shake our heads in wonder, and sometimes laugh. A wacky color palette, pages of multiple knots that look like something out of a madcap Boy Scouts manual, knots as pearls, as museum exhibitions, as chocolate candy, as weird wallpaper, all became possible in the digital darkroom. To those who still harbor doubts about the artistic legitimacy of such post-negative computer enhancement, Schatz says simply: "I could have actually painted the models, but that would have diminished the possibilities of what I and they could attempt in the studio. Looking at all the directions I could go on the screen taught me what I did and didn't have to worry about when I was actually shooting."

Howard Schatz did not set out to make metaphors, just to chip away at the marble of a visual idea. We're free to look at these pictures and take from them whatever we see, to build our own meanings beyond anything the photographer intended. After all, the intertwinings of humans, in body and mind, filled with the counter tension of clinging and resisting, lush with sexual promise and rife with discomfort and claustrophobia, are irresistibly present in these pictures. We can easily imagine the models laughing, squirming, feeling the stirrings of excitement, and finally groaning and dreaming of freedom. We are reminded of this irony: humans spend their days and hours seeking to become interlocked with others, then spend at least an equal amount of time and energy looking for the key.

But we need not dwell on that. These are wonderful pictures that need have no other meaning than the pleasure and surprise they bring. They show us what we haven't seen before, and we can be glad Howard Schatz pushed the shutter.

OWEN EDWARDS

Other side: Three different views of the same body knot













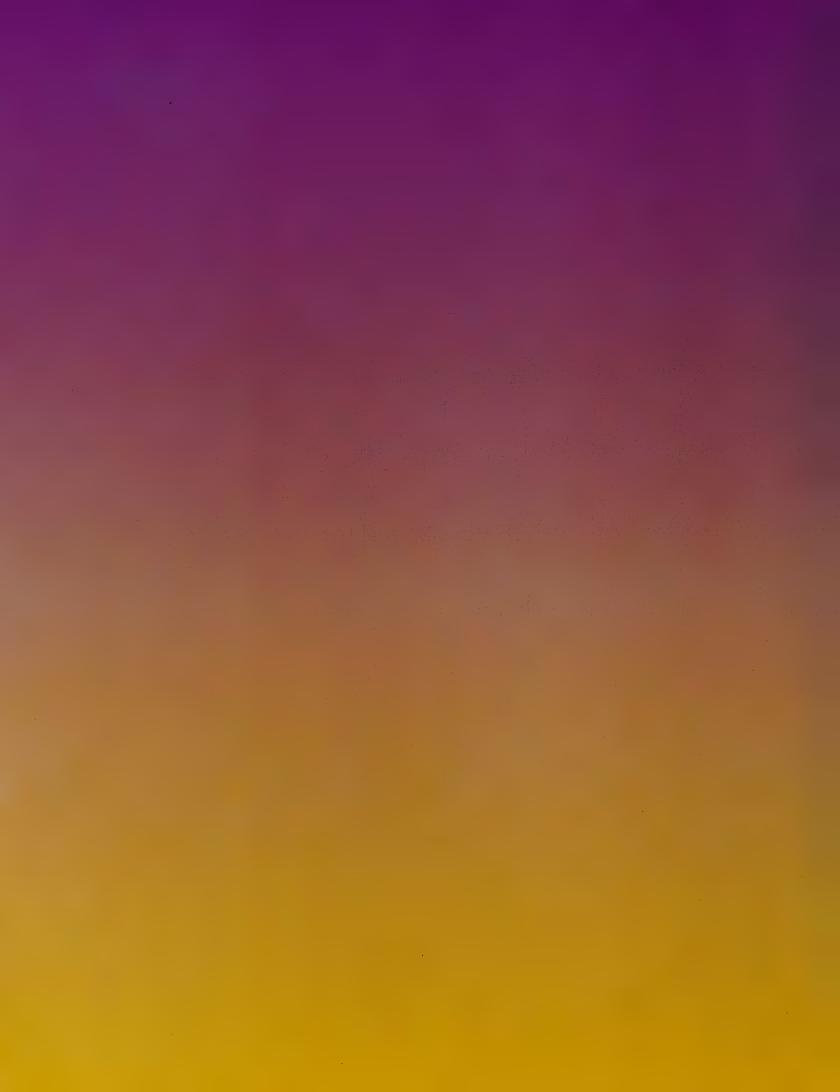


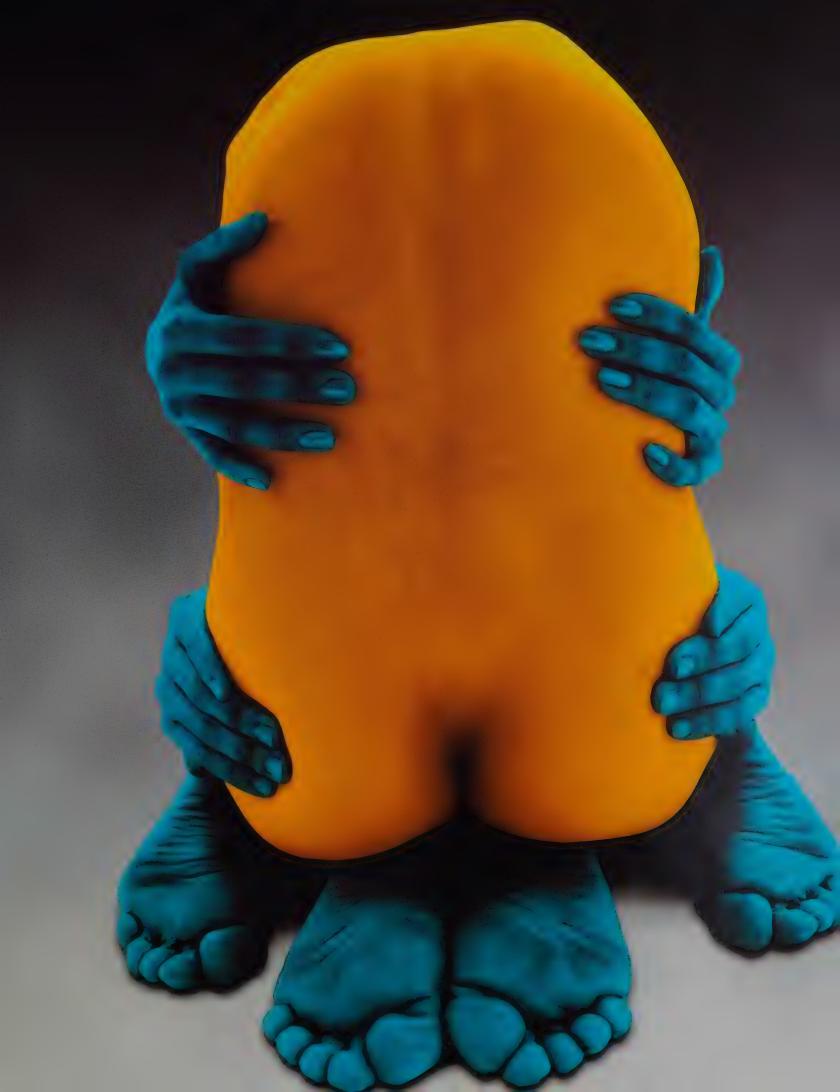


























































































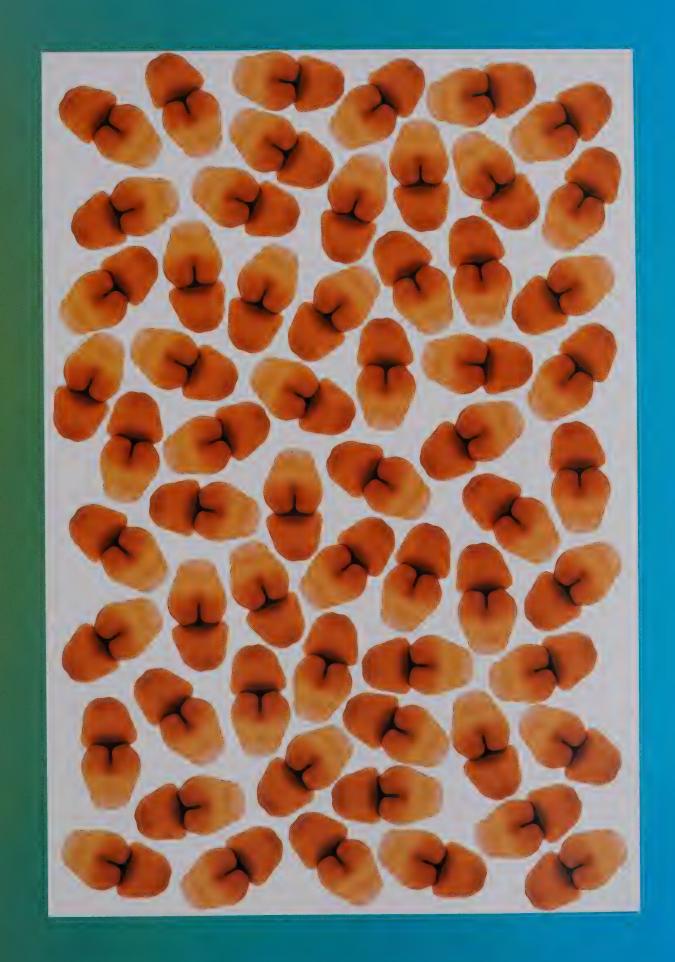
























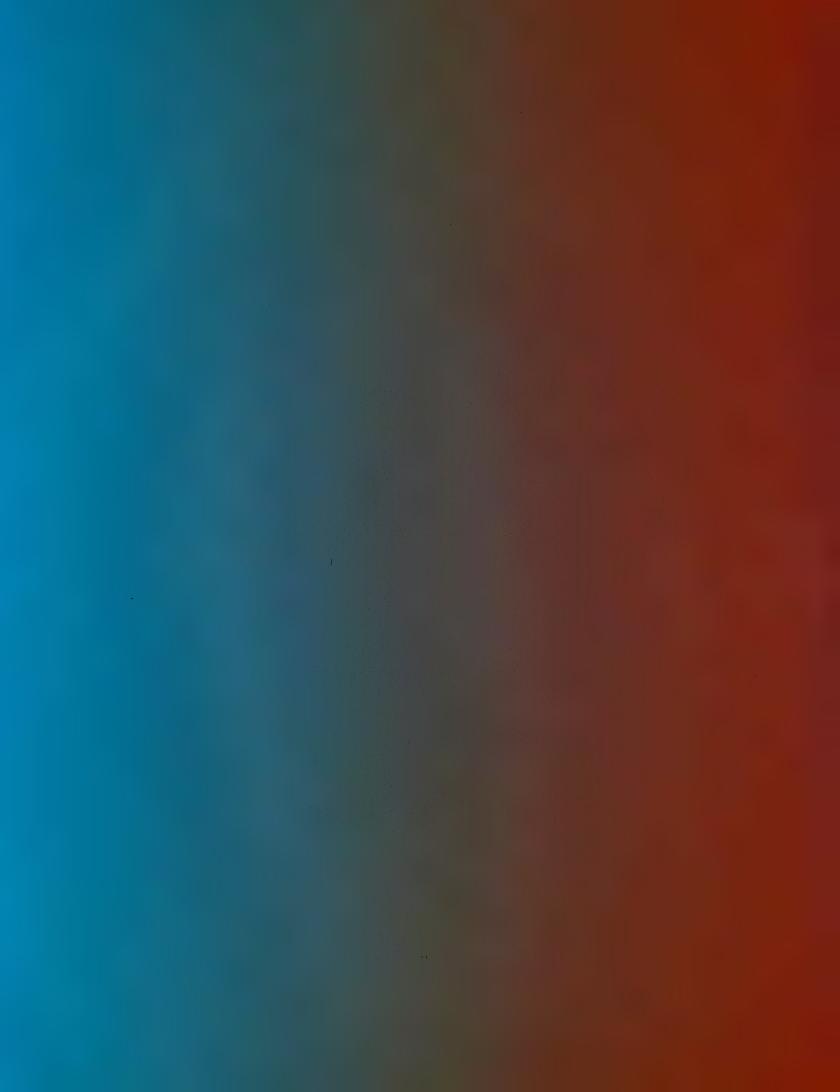
























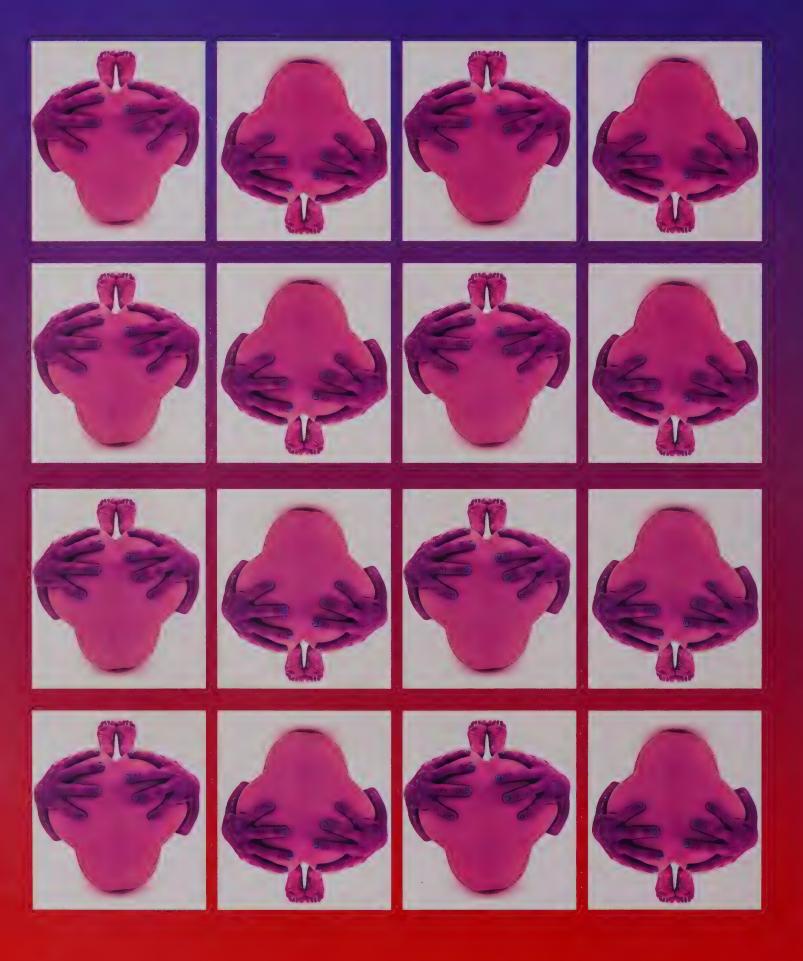






































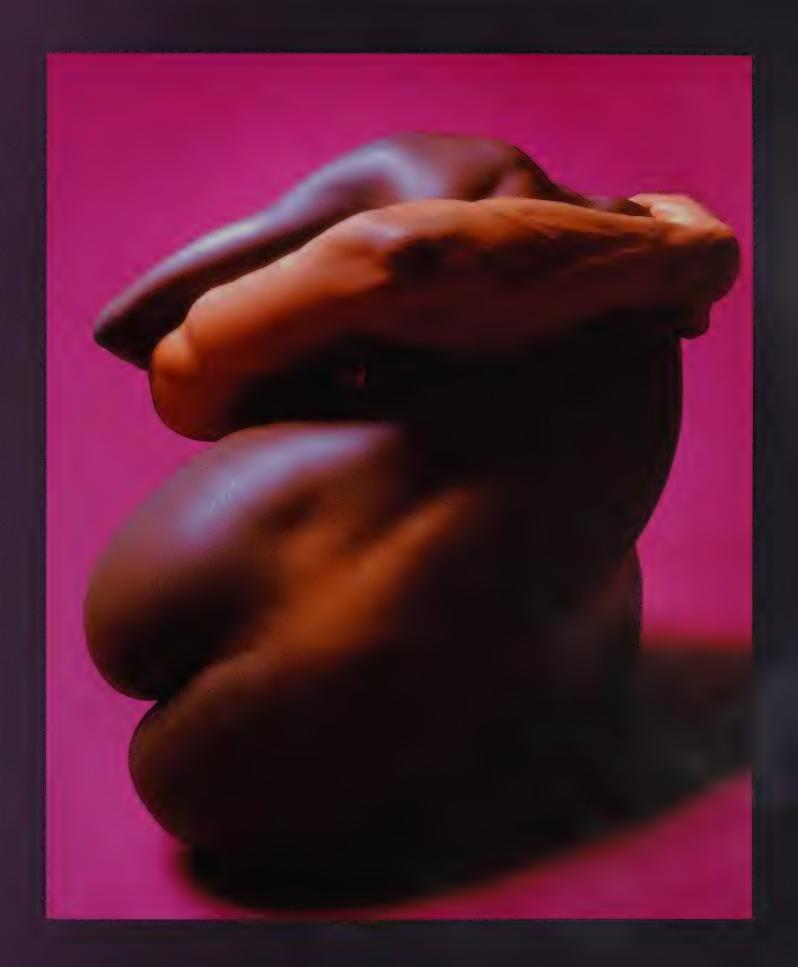


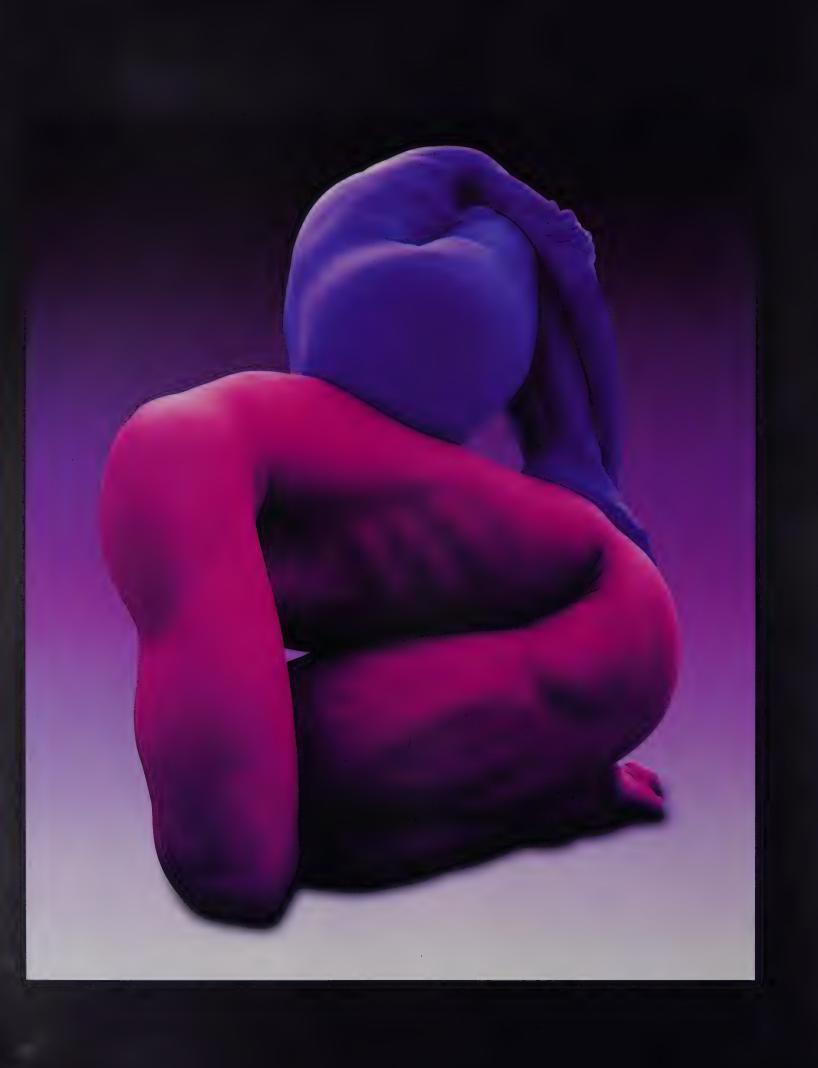






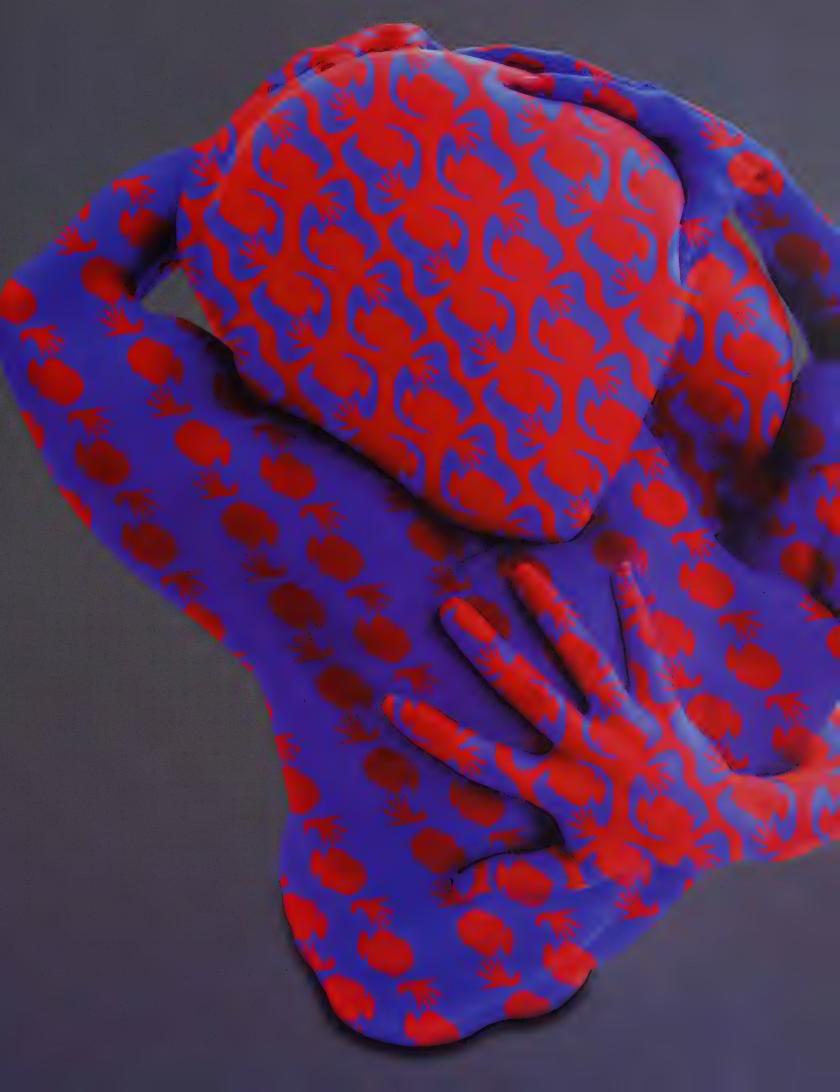








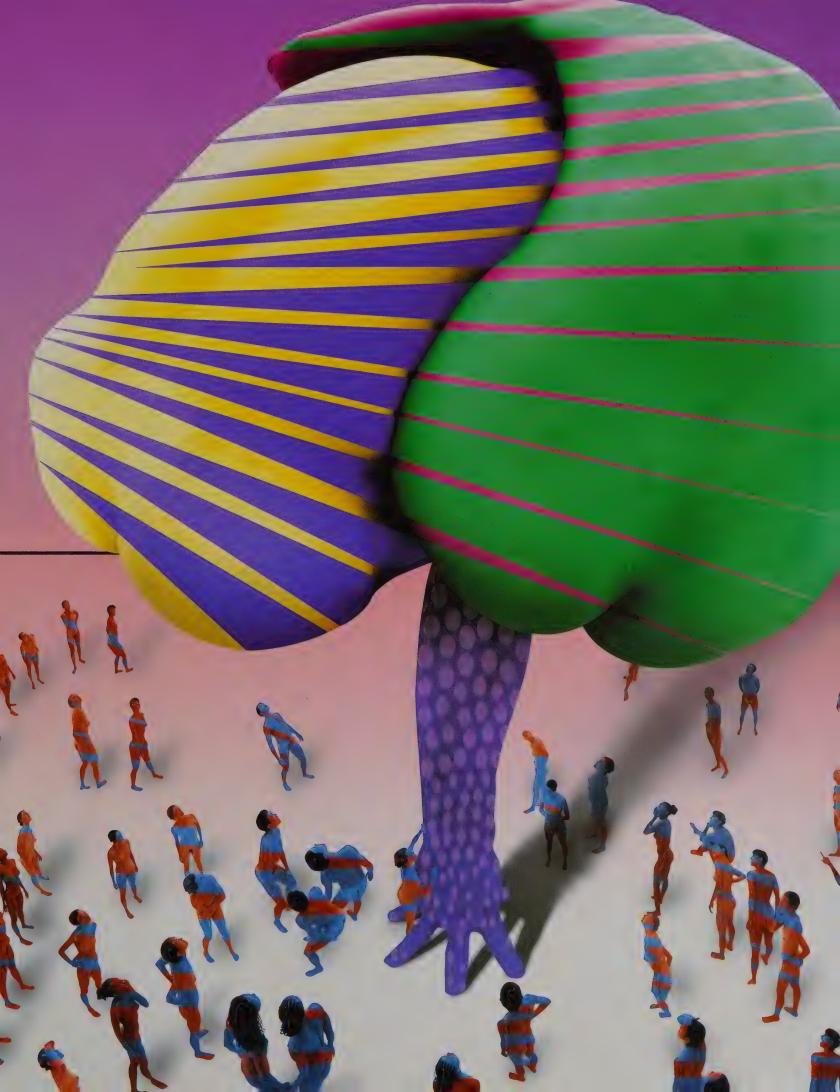




















































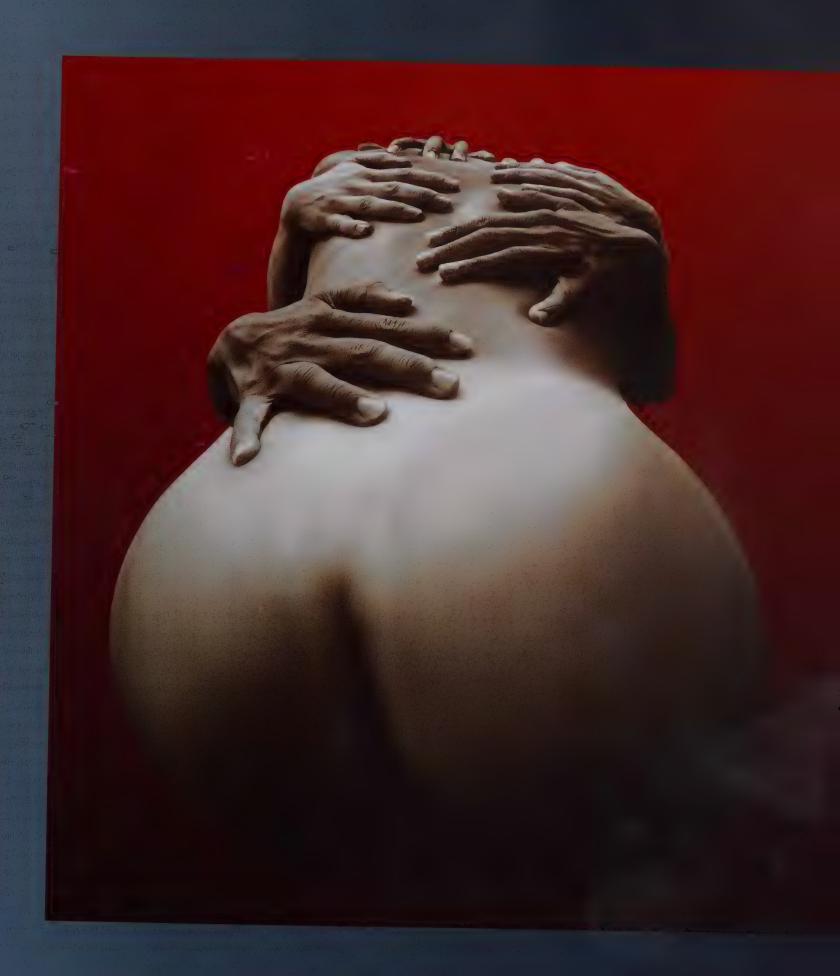




























## KNOTS DIRECTORY









































Knot #187



























Knot #198



Knot #256



Knot #121



Knot #125



Knot #255



Knot #108





















Knot #183



Knot #122



Knot #84



Knot #151



Knot #79



Knot #90



Knot #16:



Knot #245



Knot #63



Knot #196



Knot #114



Knot #1



Knot #98



Knot #132



Knot #179



Knot #76



Knot #182



Knot #82



Knot #8



Knot #186



Knot #135



Knot #185



Knot #27



Knot #201



Knot #227



Knot #139



Knot #133



Knot #149



Knot #72



Knot #235



Knot #144



Knot #213



Knot #168



Knot #17



Knot #22



Knot #184



Knot #220



Knot #205



Knot #211

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OWARD SCHATZ is the world's preeminent photographer of the human body. BODY KNOTS is his most recent in a stunning series of best-selling work and broadens the eye-stopping range of images to come from this trailblazer's camera. Rich in humor and playful in its elegance of form, BODY KNOTS breaks new ground with an arresting new way of viewing the world.

Schatz's work has been recorded in nine other volumes of work: THE VIRTUOSO, POOL LIGHT, PASSION & LINE, BODYTYPE: AN INTIMATE ALPHABET, NEWBORN, WATERDANCE, HOMELESS: PORTRAITS OF AMERICANS IN HARD TIMES, SEEING RED: THE RAPTURE OF REDHEADS, and GIFTED WOMAN. All of these books are the result of a unique collaboration of the talents of photographer Howard Schatz and project director and editor, Beverly Ornstein.

OWEN EDWARDS is a writer, editor, and art critic who has written for numerous magazines, including AMERICAN PHOTO, GQ, TOWN & COUNTRY, and THE VILLAGE VOICE. Formerly the art editor and photography critic for SATURDAY REVIEW and the editor of AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER, Edwards is the author of four books, including the best-selling design book QUINTESSSENCE. He served as a consultant and commentator for the PBS documentary on Richard Avedon. Currently, Edwards is a senior consulting editor and columnist for the FORBES information technology supplement ASAP in San Francisco.

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## BODY KNOTS

An extraordinary

collection of work

by photographer

Howard Schatz

that explores the

human form in an

astonishing array

of configurations,

from the puzzling

to the apparently

impossible, in black

and silver and

exhilarating color.



